



State of South Carolina
Office of The Lieutenant Governor

André Bauer
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Office on Aging
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**Central Midlands Family Caregiver
Support Program Wins National Award**

A Midlands area program designed to provide support for people caring for aged or disabled loved ones in the home has won a national award. The Central Midlands Area Agency on Aging's Family Caregiver Support Program has been selected as a recipient of a 2006 Aging Achievement Awards by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a).

"I'm really proud of the Central Midlands team and what they've been able to accomplish using pretty limited funds and resources," said Lt. Governor André Bauer. "All of our Regional Family Caregiver Support programs and all of our Family Caregiver Advocates in South Carolina are doing a fantastic job and it's nice to see one of those programs getting recognized for it."

Established in 2001 under a statewide effort that places a Family Caregiver Advocate in each of South Carolina's 10 regional Area Agencies on Aging, the Central Midland's program provides individual counseling, support groups, respite care and other services for area families. The program is coordinated by the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging.

"The Family Caregiver Support Program is consumer directed and focuses on giving individuals a break from their caregiving duties," said Julie Merrill, Aging Program Specialist for the Family Caregiver Support Program. "We serve individuals caring for older adults in the home or seniors raising children. The monthly support groups have helped connect individuals experiencing similar situations as a support network."

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Central Midlands AAA Director Sharon Seago accepted the award at the organization's annual conference in Chicago on August 6. The Aging Achievement Awards highlight innovative and successful aging initiatives operated by Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and Title VI - Native American Aging Programs that improve the lives of older Americans and their caregivers nationwide. As an Aging Achievement Award winner, Central Midland's Family Caregiver program will also be featured in the Best Practices Clearinghouse on the n4a website http://www.n4a.org/best_practices.cfm .

In South Carolina, family members have always provided the majority of long-term care for older relatives. Eighteen percent of adults in South Carolina provide regular care or assistance to an elderly relative or another family member with long-term illness or disability. Many people provide this round the clock care in their own homes; many out of financial necessity. The psychological and physical demands on these unpaid caregivers are often overwhelming. The Central Midlands Family Caregiver Advocate seeks to provide assistance to individuals caring for family members aged 60+ with health problems in five critical areas:

- **Information:** public education, and outreach regarding available support services.
- **Assistance:** providing assistance to individuals on how to gain access to services.
- **Counseling, Education & Training:** providing advice, guidance and instruction to caregivers on an individual basis to solve problems faced in their role as caregivers.
- **Respite:** helping caregivers find temporary relief from care-giving responsibilities on an occasional or emergency basis.
- **Supplemental Services:** Provide compensation to assist with the cost of some services (e.g. home safety supplies, nutritional supplements, incontinence supplies) used in the provision of care to family members.

There are 400,000 family caregivers in South Carolina, providing 419 million hours of care per year at an estimated value of over \$3.7 billion. Nearly one out of every five adults in South Carolina provides regular care or assistance to a frail elderly or disabled friend or family member over 60 years of age. Family caregivers have always provided most of the long-term care in our country.

In fiscal year 2005, South Carolina's Family Caregiver Support Program:

- Provided information to **5,676** family caregivers;
- Helped **6,223** caregivers access services;
- Provided support, counseling and/or training to **2,254** caregivers;
- Provided respite services to **1,841** caregivers;
- Provided **154,273** hours of respite care to 1,841 caregivers; and
- Provided supplemental services to **1,355** caregivers.